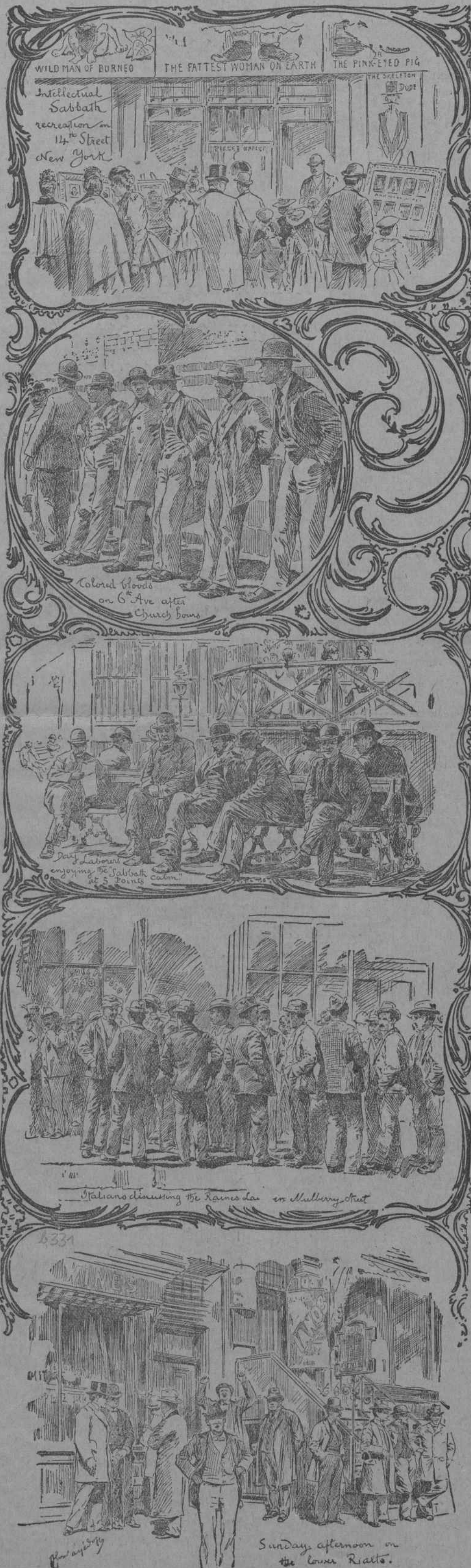


# BOTH SIDES OF THE GREAT SUNDAY PROBLEM.

Snap Shot

Photographs of  
Sunday Afternoon in New York.



"LOOK here, upon this picture, and on this!"

Now, in calm judgment, free from all bias, prejudice and hypocrisy, let us all—Christian, Jew, Mohammedan, atheist and agnostic alike—look upon these two pictures. They are not imaginative sketches; they are photographs of realities. They depict not a theory, but a condition.

There is much dissatisfaction in the city of New York with the laws that control the observance of Sunday. There is no such dissatisfaction in any city of Europe.

Why is this?

To one-third of the population of New York Sunday brings a host of restrictions and petty annoyances that make its cognomen—the day of rest—a mark for ridicule. To the population of London, of Paris, of Berlin, of Vienna and of every other city of Europe, Sunday brings relief, not only from toil, but from that monotony of work-a-day life, which, after all, is the chief distinction between the rich and the poor.

Why is this?

This shall be neither a plea nor an argument. It is merely to be a presentation of various conditions that should interest every man who is interested in anything that concerns the welfare of his community.

The Rameau liquor law is not the beginning of the dissatisfaction that exists in this city; it has merely heightened it.

The dissatisfaction has existed for a great many years, and although the leading men of the community have at various times given it careful consideration, they have done nothing to lessen it.

What are the conditions that exist to-day?

The column to the left is made up of actual scenes that were witnessed in New York last Sunday, and which, no doubt, you can see again this Sunday and next Sunday. Under the laws of this State museums are allowed to be open to the public on Sunday. Museums in New York may be divided into two classes—the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Central Park and dime museums. There being only one of the former, and that being open only during certain hours, and being frequented by an infinitesimal fraction of the population, it has not been deemed worth while to present a picture of it. The other class is much more important.

The first picture, therefore, represents a scene in front of a dime museum. It is the only place of amusement that is open on the day of rest. They give sacred concerts there—as sacred as they are concerts.

A lower or viler form of amusing a wearied mind it would be difficult to devise. Still, after six days, during which a man has seen nothing but the interior of his shop and the walls of his dwelling, it must be admitted that it is a diversion, a recreation for his eye. If for nothing else, to see the fattest woman on earth or a pig with pink eyes, particularly the latter, for the average New Yorker has not the faintest idea whether it is usual for pigs to have pink eyes or not.

PICTURE NO. 2. This is taken from the Tenderloin Precinct. These men are not desperadoes. They are not "barley negroes" who are waiting for an opportunity to commit a crime. They are not outcasts. They are merely uninteresting and uninteresting citizens, who, according to the Constitution of the United States, have a right to live.

In private life they are probably waiters, porters, drivers, messengers or something else on that plane. This is Sunday. They have been to church in the morning. Some went because they were Christians, some from force of habit, some for diversion. It is after church hours. The beer gardens are closed. The theatres and concert halls are closed. There is no ball game, no horse racing, boat racing, yacht racing, or any kind of athletic game that they can attend. There is no place for them to dance or even to sing without running the risk of being arrested. They have already been to Central Park and they cannot afford the "sacred concert" in the Metropolitan Opera House. Now! What can they do that will allow them to rest and yet will divert their minds from the rut of their daily life? The picture shows their answer.

PICTURE NO. 3. Here we are at the Five Points. In solving the problem of rest and recreation for the denizens of this locality, you must bear in mind the important fact that the ten cents necessary to take them to Central Park or to any other distant part of the city, forms an important item in their calculation, and must, therefore, do the same in ours.

Problem: Very few of them go to church. Hardly any of them have convictions pertaining to the religious aspect of the Sabbath. They are law-abiding citizens who have a right to live. There is no cheap concert hall at Five Points that is open on Sunday for any other day, for that matter. There is no roomy park there. True, the city is making a park in this neighborhood, but when it is open no games will be allowed there on Sunday, there will be no carousals, swings, or any kind of diversion for children, and everybody must "keep off the grass."

Query: What can the laborers who live there do on the day of rest? Instead of strolling on benches all day waiting for bedtime?

PICTURE NO. 4. Again the conditions change. The residents of the locality in which this sketch was made were born in the southern part of Italy. Their ideas, tastes, inclinations, habits and mode of living are different from ours. If you will glance across the page at the second picture in the right-hand column, it will give you an idea of what these people were accustomed to. Of course, upon coming to this country they renounced all this and received for it—when they became citizens—the inalienable right to live and be free. Still, they are human beings and Sunday comes to them as it comes to all of us.

Problem: To these people wine or beer is a necessary article of daily food. On Sunday they cannot get it. They are passionately fond of music. On Sunday, the only day upon which they do not toil until they are ready to drop with fatigue, they cannot hear it. They love a blue sky and grassy fields and dancing and fresh air. The laws of this State make no reference to the sky, but everything else is denied them. They are mostly Catholics and all of them attend church, but the service is brief and after noon the time hangs heavily upon their hands.

Query: How can they rest and recreate themselves in the open air without lounging on doorsteps and sidewalks? (It is too far to walk to Central Park, and even if they went there they could get nothing to drink, could not roll on the grass under shady trees, and would have to tramp out all night if they wanted to get within hearing distance of the solitary band that sometimes plays on the Mall.)

Now we come to the last picture in this New York column. It represents a scene on the lower Riato. This spot is frequented by a very peculiar class of men. Some are actors, most of them are merely workmen employed in the mechanical departments of theatres, but they all have these habits in common: they live in boarding houses, they have few kindred ties in this city, they have very little money, and they are fond of getting together either to brag over successes which they never had or to sympathize with one another in their misfortunes.

Problem: There is no cafe or beer garden where they can sit over a glass of beer or wine, or even soda water, and chat upon a Sunday afternoon. The benches in the park are blistered by the sun heat and afford no attraction. There are no theatrical performances which they can attend. Their "homes" are dreary. The city promenades upon a hot Sunday afternoon are practically deserted. They cannot very well sleep all day and night, too.

Query: What can they do instead of loafing on the lower Riato? (Unless they vary it by loafing on the upper Riato.)

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this!"

At the top of the column to the right you see a picture that was taken in London. It may be Hampstead Heath or Clapham Common or Putney or Gravesend or Greenwich—the life is the same everywhere. One man is drinking, a strolling player is actually playing under the nose of a "bobby," the game of "hit-the-nigger-on-the-head" is going on in its English counterpart, there is a tavern in the background, and it is Sunday.

True, the English Constitution does not give the people either the right to live or to be free, but somehow or other they always look forward to Sunday as the one day when those who have toiled can rest and smile and be happy. The National Gallery, the South Kensington Museum, and the Bethnal Green Museum are open on Sunday.

Between noon and 3 o'clock, and again between 6 and 11 o'clock at night the taverns and public houses are open to all comers. They do not interfere with the churches, and there is very little roistering. The theatres, however, are closed, and in this restriction upon the pleasure of the masses lies the only resemblance to the condition that prevails in New York and the only difference from the conditions that prevail in all the other civilized centres of Europe.

In Italy, the home of the oldest and strongest religious organization the world has ever seen, the benediction in the Sunday church service is the signal for the beginning of a day of recreation, of enjoyment for rich and poor. The picture represents a scene in the country district. In the garden of a tavern the peasants are playing, singing and drinking the wine of the soil. Yet they are a devoutly religious people.

Take Vienna, beside whose civilization New York is in a state of absolute barbarism, those quarters that are inhabited by the poor are transformed on Sunday into the frolicsome condition of a country fair. The picture represents a scene in one of these quarters. All the cafes and beer gardens are open, there is music and singing and dancing everywhere, those who wish to go to church may do so unmolested, and no sound of revelry will disturb their worship; those who wish to go to a picture gallery, to go to a concert, to roll in the grass or to lie in the shade of a spreading tree, with a book in one hand and a measure of beer in the other—these, too, may have their wish, and the cost is within the reach of the poorest.

And now we come to Paris, which in science, art and literature is to the modern world what Athens was to the ancient. How is Sunday observed in Paris? Here is how it is observed: The prices in the Grand Opera House are lower than they are on week-days so that the poor man who works day and night may hear the great singers. All the libraries, museums and art galleries are thrown open to the public. In most of the concert halls the price of admission is lower; all of them, at any rate, are open. The beer gardens and the cafes abound with people. Crowds promenade the beautiful boulevards in the evening, and crowds sit in front of the cafes, and slowly these crowds change places until all have both drunk and walked. Upon every side you hear the strains of music. In certain quarters of the city you can see acrobatic performances, bicycle races, Punch and Judy shows and every conceivable form of amusement for the populace.

These are conditions and not theories. No criminologist has yet declared that the people of any of these European cities are in any way worse than the residents of New York. No statistician has yet demonstrated that there is more drunkenness in those places on Sunday or on any other day than there is in New York. No theologian has yet proved that every Viennese, Londoner, every Italian and every Parisian will roast in the hereafter for not observing Sunday as it is observed in New York. The future of those people, both in this world and the next, seems every bit as promising as ours. And yet, are they not happier?

Harmless

Sunday Amusements

In the Big Cities of Europe.

